

themselves pessimists representing that the world is growing worse and worse. Can both be true?

2. God's method of developing character has not been compulsion but teaching.

Gal. 3:24: "The law was our school-master to bring us to Christ."

Titus 2:11-12: "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world."

John 16:8: "When he the Spirit is come he will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness and of judgment."

If optimists would relieve the angels of their task of separating the evil from the good, then pessimists would grieve away the Holy Spirit, for the work which Jesus said he would accomplish is according to them, to end in failure, only a few being ready to be caught up into bliss and the most godly of them being "but a pack of error and unrighteousness."

What has become of "Christ formed in you?" (Gal. 4:19.) and of the Spirit guiding into all truth? (John 16:13.)

If God can make men moral by a miracle why did he not do it long ago? Morality is a matter of the will and God does not force the will but develops it and teaches men to will the good.

This as we have seen from the Scriptures and from history has been his method in the past and present dispensations, and there is no reason to suppose that it will be different in the future.

3. Since God is revealing himself gradually, dispensations merge into each other without great intervening cataclysms.

The patriarchal period was succeeded by the Mosaic, not by any world-shaking theophany, but thru a long period of bondage and deliverance.

When Jesus came it was not to destroy, but to fulfill the law. He introduced the leaven of the kingdom but the change from the old dispensation to the new was so gradual that the world in general did not know that it was taking place.

There is abundant evidence in the Scriptures and in the writings of the early fathers that many of the Old Testament institutions, as the Sabbath, circumcision, tithes and the passover were observed by many of the first churches, and in some places for scores of years.

Was the change any the less real because it was gradual? And will the coming of the fullness of the kingdom by natural growth be any the less real than if it were sudden and spectacular?

4. But the question is asked, What will you do with those passages which seem to indicate an apostate condition of the world until the end of the age and then a sudden change to a sinless condition?

I answer, do with them just as Jesus did with similar passages concerning his first advent.

There are many Scriptures which, taken literally, would indicate the coming of a messiah who would be a glorious temporal ruler. See Ps. 72, Jer. 23:5-6, Mic. 5:2-3, Mal. 3:1, Isa. 9:6-7, Zech. 6:12-13.

The Jews urged these passages to prove a sudden, glorious first advent with just as great force as pre-millennialists urge others to prove a sudden, glorious temporal reign at the second advent. What did Jesus do?

Luke 17:20-21: "And when he was demanded of the Pharisees when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation; neither shall they say, Lo here! or lo there! for behold, the kingdom of God is within you."

Then he followed with illustrations of the lightning and of the days of Noah, and of Sodom and of two women at the mill, to show that the kingdom would not come with the warning and in the manner that people expected.

A little later he cautioned them again against following people who would predict just where and how the Lord would appear and teaches the lesson of the fig tree (Lk. 21:29.) which by its natural growth and putting forth of buds and blossoms proclaims the nearness of summer thus showing the natural growth of the kingdom until the time of its harvest.

But it was hard for the disciples, as it is hard for some now to perceive that the kingdom is inward and spiritual rather than outward and temporal, and in spite of all the plain teaching Jesus had given them they thought his life a failure because he did not set up a kingdom with the kind of glory they expected. He therefore after his resurrection went thru the whole matter with two of them and explained the Scriptures concerning himself. Luke 24:25-27. In this case however it was those who insisted on the kingdom coming thru the sudden, miraculous appearance of the Messiah who were called "fools and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken."

In spite of everything many still clung to the old interpretation of the prophecies, but since they could no longer apply them literally to Christ's first advent they said "They will be fulfilled at his second coming." The Jews for the most part still join in this hope for a kingdom like unto the kingdoms of this world. Their eyes have been so fixed on this vision that they have been unable to see the growth of the real kingdom in their midst.

Is it not possible for others to be so dazed by a theory as to be blind to the facts about them? Who knows but that when Christ shall come again he shall reign in the hearts of men all unnoticed by some because of their gazing into the heavens looking for him? I do not say that it will be so. I do not pretend to know the particulars of Christ's second coming. No words which have grown out of past material experience can actually

describe to us the spiritual realities of that day.

The sayings of Jesus have truths in them which were dark to the people of his day but seem clear now, and other truths which yet seem dark but which in due time will be apparent. Bound up with signs of the end of the age are sayings which seem to indicate that they should be fulfilled in that same generation. See Luke 21:32. 1 Cor. 7:29. It is well enough to study the prophecies and compared ideas about them, but let us be careful not to form theories from only a few selected passages.

We may speak positively too, from the facts of our own experience, but we should not be too dogmatic on mere questions of interpretation. Let us beware lest we read into God's word and into our own writings meanings which are not there.

And let us especially be slow to unchristianize any who honestly differ in opinion from us. Wisdom was not born, nor will it die with any one of us and the kingdom is large enough for any humble disciple of Christ whether he believe in the second coming before or after the millenium.

The fundamental requirement of God is not that we believe in the pictures of 'Dore' or the theology of Milton or Dante, but in "Him whom God hath sent." John 6:29.

In this let us be united as "working together with him," we hasten the day for which we pray. "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth."

FIXED IN A RUT

C. H. WETHERBE

Many a man of large ability has greatly hindered the possibility of wide work and influence in himself by centering all of his thought and power in one line of action, thus getting firmly fixed in a comparatively narrow rut. This does not necessarily imply that the man is not doing a good work, nor that he is not helpfully influential; and yet such an one, were he to broadly develop his capacities, would be able to accomplish other good things which he now cannot properly do.

Rev. Dr. J. B. Gambrell of Dallas, Texas, in the Baptist Standard of that city says: "When you take a debater, who lives in it until he gets the poise and habit of mind necessary for his success in that work, he withdraws his resources from other matters and becomes as weak in those other matters as he is strong in debate. This is the history of debaters. Within my day I have known, either personally or thru the papers, quite a large number of men who have stood before the world as debaters. I could call the roll, and every reader would at once recognize the justness of the roll call. These men, without an exception, as far as I recall, have been utter failures in the practical affairs of the denomination. One after another has led enterprises into the ditch and wrecked them, not because they did not